

The Powerful Knowledge Unit Audit

Michael Young's four tests, run on one unit in ten minutes by the people who teach it. Tick the column that describes the unit as it is taught now, not as the scheme of work describes it. Then write the one change. Everyday knowledge is not the enemy; it is what the powerful kind explains.

BUILD IT · CURRICULUM AUDIT · ONE PAGE

Unit	Subject	Phase	Date
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The four tests TICK ONE COLUMN PER TEST

1	Specialised Young (2008); Young and Muller (2013) Is the knowledge in this unit produced and checked by a specialist community, the discipline, or is it what learners could pick up from everyday life? Passes when A learner can say what kind of question the subject asks, and the unit's title is one of those questions. Not yet when The unit could be taught by anyone with a search engine and an afternoon. The one change _____	☐ Not yet ☐ Partly ☐ Passes
2	Systematic Young and Muller (2010, 2013) Are the concepts in this unit related to each other, and to earlier and later units, so that learners can generalise beyond this one case? Passes when You can draw the unit as a map of concepts with arrows to the units either side, and learners can use the concept on a case they have not met. Not yet when Learners can define every term on the organiser and cannot use any of them on a new example. The one change _____	☐ Not yet ☐ Partly ☐ Passes
3	Beyond experience Young (2008); Young and Muller (2013) Does the unit take learners somewhere they could not go on their own: another time, place, scale or way of seeing the familiar? Passes when A learner comes back to their own street, story or kitchen and sees it differently. Not yet when The unit confirms what learners already thought and adds some names. The one change _____	☐ Not yet ☐ Partly ☐ Passes
4	Open to challenge Young and Muller (2013): powerful knowledge is fallible and revisable Can learners see how this knowledge was made, argued over and could be revised, and do they get to do some of that themselves? Passes when At least one lesson where the answer in the textbook is put on trial, and an assessment task that could not be answered from the organiser alone. Not yet when The end-of-unit test could be passed by a learner who has memorised the knowledge organiser and understood none of it. The one change _____	☐ Not yet ☐ Partly ☐ Passes

Not yet

Any test at Not yet. Do not rewrite the unit; make the one change on the weakest test and audit again next term.

Getting there

Nothing at Not yet, not everything at Passes. One change on the weakest test is usually enough.

Powerful, as it stands

All four at Passes. Protect the sequence and the assessment: they are what other units will borrow.

Two worked examples VERDICT PER TEST, THEN THE ONE CHANGE

GEOGRAPHY · YEAR 7 · RIVERS

Why is the river where it is, and who decided what was built beside it?

- 1 Passes: the unit runs on the geographer's questions (where, why there, what would change it).
- 2 Partly: system, scale and place are named but the organiser does not link them to the coasts unit that follows.
- 3 Not yet: the local river is the whole unit; nothing at another scale.
- 4 Partly: one flood-data lesson, but the end test is recall.

The one change Pair the local river with the Ganges at basin scale and ask the same question of both; the local place becomes an example, not the point. Then swap one recall question for two flood sources that disagree.

PRIMARY SCIENCE · YEAR 4 · MATERIALS

Why does salt dissolve and sand does not, and how could we tell them apart without tasting?

- 1 Partly: the words are there (solid, liquid, dissolve) but the class never asks what would count as evidence.
- 2 Passes: states of matter is placed between Year 3 rocks and Year 5 reversible change on the scheme.
- 3 Passes: the particle picture takes learners under the surface of a puddle they see every day.
- 4 Not yet: dissolving is presented as a fact; the test asks learners to name which materials dissolve.

The one change Give the class a result that does not fit (sugar dissolving faster in warm water) and ask what they would need to check before changing the explanation. Assess the checking, not the list.